



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ETHICAL CONDUCT POLICY

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and quality of performance for all employees of the Department of Agriculture (DOAg). DOAg employees have positions of significant trust and responsibility. It is critical that each employee conducts him or herself ethically and avoid even the appearance of impropriety in all dealings with the public, other agencies and government entities, and private contractors.

This ethics policy is intended to be a general guide in determining what conduct is prohibited so that it may be avoided. The policy supplements the Code of Ethics for State Employees and other applicable provisions of the Connecticut General Statutes, it does not supersede these laws and policies.

APPLICATION

The provisions of this policy apply to all employees of the Department of Agriculture. All current and future DOAg employees shall be given a copy of this policy. It will be the responsibility of each employee to be familiar with the policy and comply with its provisions.

All employees are expected to avoid situations that violate the provisions of this policy or the State Ethics Code or give the appearance of impropriety. Any employee who needs guidance on the application of this policy or a provision of the State Ethics Code should contact the agency Ethics Liaison Officer, Wayne Kasacek at (860) 713-2587, or the Office of State Ethics at (860) 566-4472.

ENFORCEMENT

DOAg expects that all employees will comply with all laws and policies regarding ethical conduct. Violations of the law may subject an employee to sanctions from agencies or authorities outside of DOAg. Whether or not this occurs, DOAg retains the right to independently review and respond to any alleged violation by an employee. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from state service.

POLICY

Outside Employment. No DOAg employee may accept outside employment that (1) would impair the employee's independence of judgment with regard to his/her official duties or (2) would encourage the disclosure of confidential information gained in state service. Generally, outside employment is barred if the private employer can benefit from the state employee's official actions.

Financial Benefit. DOAg employees may not use their official positions or confidential information they obtained at DOAg for personal financial benefit or to financially benefit the employee's family member, or a business with which the employee or a family member is associated.

Business Interests. No DOAg employee shall have, directly or indirectly, an interest in any business or enterprise doing business with the state that could cause or create the appearance of a conflict with, or influence the performance of, the employee's duties with the agency.

Gifts. In general, DOAg employees are prohibited from accepting anything of value, discounts or gratuities of any kind from anyone (1) doing business with the state, (2) seeking to do business with the state, (3) directly regulated by DOAg, or (4) known to be a registered lobbyist or lobbyist's representative.

By statute, "anything of value" includes, but is not limited to, a gift, loan, political contribution, reward or promise of future employment. Gift is specifically defined in Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-79(e). Among the most common exclusions from the definition of gift are items valued at less than \$10.00 (not to exceed an aggregate of \$50.00 per year) and food/beverage valued at less than \$50.00 per person per year where the donor is in attendance at the occasion where the food/beverage is being consumed.

Appearances. No DOAg employee may accept any fee or honorarium in return for a speech or appearance made or article written in his or her official capacity.

State Equipment & Information. No DOAg employee may use or distribute state information or use state equipment or materials for other than state business purposes.

Employment of Family Members & Others. No DOAg employee may use his or her position or influence to obtain employment for a member of his or her family, or principals or employees of a business with which he or she is associated. The employee must withdraw from the process as soon as the conflict is known or discovered.

Specifically, no DOAg employee, directly or indirectly, shall use his official authority to coerce, command, or require another state employee to improperly obtain an appointment for any person to a position within state service or to act in violation of the state personnel rules and regulations within respect to appointment and promotion.

Family members or others having special relationships with current employees are not prohibited from seeking employment with DOAg, but influence may not be exerted to give such persons an advantage. DOAg employees also may not supervise relatives. Employees should be aware that signing personnel forms, performance appraisals, vouchers, reimbursement forms and the like may constitute a violation of this policy.

No DOAg employee or a member of his or her immediate family or a business with which (s)he is associated may enter into a contract with the state valued at \$100.00 or more, unless the contract has been awarded through an open and public process. This provision does not apply to contracts of employment as a state employee or contracts made by court appointment.

Political Activities. A DOAg employee seeking to or holding political office shall notify the Commissioner in writing through his or her supervisor or chain of command. Such employee shall comply with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes section 5-266a. A DOAg employee may not engage in partisan political activities while on state duty time, nor shall state materials or equipment be used for the purpose of influencing a political election.

Some employees may be covered by federal law (Hatch Act), which covers employees whose principal employment is financed in whole or in part by federal funds. The federal requirements allow participation in political activities, but prohibit the use of the employee's official position to contribute to political activities or to interfere with the result of an election. Because each situation may be different, guidance should be obtained from the Office of State Ethics.

Post State Employment. All DOAg employees are expected to comply with the revolving door provisions of the state ethics code after leaving state service. These provisions contain restrictions that prohibit:

- a. disclosure of confidential information gained in state service;
- b. representing anyone for compensation before DOAg for a period of one year after leaving state service
- c. representing anyone in a matter that such DOAg employee was involved in during service with DOAg;
- d. employment with a contractor for a period of one year after leaving state service if the DOAg employee participated in, or supervised, the negotiation or award of a contract valued at \$50,000.00 and the contract was signed within a year before the DOAg employee leaves state service.

DOAg employees contemplating leaving state service should take these provisions into consideration while engaging in any future employment search.

Important Ethics Reference Materials:

It is strongly recommended that every employee read and review the following ethics materials:

- Connecticut General Statutes Sections 1-79 through 1-89a, found at http://www.ethics.state.ct.us/Statutues_and_Regulations/po_code_2004.htm
- Ethics regulations Sections 1-81-14 through 1-81-38, found at http://www.ethics.state.ct.us/Statutues_and_Regulations/regs.htm
- Guide to the Code of Ethics for Public Officials: http://www.ethics.state.ct.us/Regs_and_Code_Information/2004_poguide.htm

Executive Order No. 1 issued by Governor M. Jodi Rell